



Evaluation of the
**Washington Service
Corps Roadmap to
Civic Engagement**

Executive Summary



WSC is a member of the National Association of
Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC)

This report is based upon work supported by the
Corporation for National and Community Service
under AmeriCrops Grant No. 00ASCWA0470100

Prepared by

Abt Associates, Inc.
JoAnn Jastrzab,
Project Director
Jesse Valente

For additional
information go to:
www.wa.gov/esd/wsc

**Final Report:
Executive Summary**

**An Evaluation of the
Washington Service
Corps' *Roadmap to
Civic Engagement***

February 27, 2004

Abt Associates Inc.
55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Prepared for
Nancy Pringle, Director
Washington Service Corps
P. O. Box 9046
Olympia, WA 98507-9046

Prepared by
Jesse Valente

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of everyone who contributed their time and knowledge to this evaluation of the Washington Service Corps' *Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. The staff and AmeriCorps members of the seven service projects visited welcomed us enthusiastically to their programs, facilitated discussions with their youth-serving organization partners, and shared information about their service experiences. Their hospitality and willingness to accommodate this disruption to their normal activities is recognized and much appreciated. Guidance from Larry Fletch at Service Learning Northwest/Educational Service District 112 was much appreciated. Staff from WSC headquarters, including Nancy Pringle, Debbie Schuffenhauer, Terry René, and Kayje Booker (AmeriCorps Leader), provided ongoing feedback and thoughtful insight as the project evolved. The receptivity to evaluation feedback from all levels of WSC is indicative of the program's commitment to quality and ongoing improvement based on the suggestions of those in the field.

Introduction to the Study

Dear Colleagues,

I am proud to present you with this evaluation of the pilot year of *The Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. As we move into the latter half of our second year of the program, we are encouraged by our results thus far and by our staff and member commitment to continuous improvement.

The *Roadmap* program arose in response to growing evidence and concern that young people in this country have become increasingly disconnected from their communities and their civic duties. While institutions nationwide have begun to look for solutions, national service programs in particular have been singled out for their access to young adults and their organizational focus on service and community involvement. Beginning in 2003, all AmeriCorps programs were instructed to include training for their members on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

We at Washington Service Corps saw this situation as an opportunity, not just to inspire the ethic of civic engagement in our members, but in the youth they serve as well. We accomplished this by utilizing a cross-age tutoring structure, (a proven success strategy of our Washington Reading Corps program) in which members first experience the program, then facilitate it with youth. Not only does the facilitation reinforce the training for the AmeriCorps members, it also extends the reach of civic engagement education to include hundreds of youth, thereby maximizing the benefit to the community. In short, the Roadmap has allowed the WSC to turn a member training performance measurement into a unique program that addresses one of the most pressing needs of youth today: civic engagement.

We could not have achieved the results we have without the partnership of Service-Learning Northwest, the technical and training assistance center that developed *The Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. The *Roadmap*, using the six-step service-learning methodology, helps members walk youth through the entire process of developing a project to meet a genuine community need. Through this service learning process, members and youth learn the skills, behaviors, knowledge and values necessary to becoming effective, engaged members of their communities and of our democracy. Moreover, our results have shown that the empowerment that participants gain through successfully implementing a service project is a motivating force for positive involvement in the future.

As we went about preparing for this exciting new venture, we took great care to inform our supervisors in advance of the new program year so that they could recruit and enroll members eager for the challenge of civic engagement. Through program-wide training by the creators of the *Roadmap*, Service-Learning Northwest, we sought to give our supervisors and members the expertise necessary for successful implementation. Realizing, however, that we could not foresee all difficulties of the year ahead, we provided two AmeriCorps Leaders to aid in technical assistance and made our entire WSC staff available for coaching and support as well.

As with all new endeavors, ours had its ups and downs, but we feel confident that with our knowledgeable and capable supervisors, our ongoing open communication with the field and strong commitment to evaluation and improvement, we will continue to raise the level of our program and its impact. Already, in response to member and supervisor feedback, Service-Learning Northwest has revised the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement*, shortening the length of the curriculum, clarifying expected outcomes, and allowing members and sites more flexibility in its implementation.

In keeping with our tradition of commitment to evaluation, in 2002 WSC contracted with Abt Associates to provide an independent evaluation of our civic engagement program. Once again, we are quite pleased with the results. While anecdotal evidence from the field suggested that the program was having a significant effect, the youth and member assessments have provided us with proof in numbers that our program is succeeding in raising our participants' levels of civic engagement.

I invite you to take a look at this evaluation. If you have questions about our program, please feel free to contact me at 1-888-713-6080 or e-mail npringle@esd.wa.gov or Terry René, Civic Engagement Program Coordinator at trene@esd.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pringle, Director
Washington Service Corps

Executive Summary

The Washington Service Corps (WSC) has been a national service leader since its inception in 1983. In keeping with this status, and in recognition of the critical importance of civic education,¹ WSC contracted with Service Learning Northwest (SLNW) to develop the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. WSC and SLNW partnered in the presentation and implementation of the curriculum. The *Roadmap* is designed to increase the civic awareness and engagement of AmeriCorps members and youth. Organized into 14 units, the *Roadmap* endeavors to attain these outcomes through the use of service learning and corresponding provision of the tools needed to assess the resources and needs present in participants' communities. WSC made the decision to implement the pilot version of the curriculum at 23 of its service projects. These service projects selected a total of 60 youth-serving organizations with whom to partner in this implementation effort. To assess this initial year of the *Roadmap*, WSC contracted with Abt Associates to provide an independent evaluation of the curriculum.

Seven of the AmeriCorps project organizations that participated in the pilot version of the *Roadmap* curriculum were visited in the spring of 2003 (please see Exhibit 1 for more details on the sites included in this evaluation). The youth-serving organizations chosen as *Roadmap* partners by these project organizations convey the diversity of settings in which the curriculum was implemented. Middle school-aged youth are served by three of these youth-serving organizations, with the majority of the four remaining sites serving elementary school-aged youth. The number of AmeriCorps members actively engaged in facilitating the *Roadmap* curriculum varied from 1 to 11, with most of the sites (5 of the 7) utilizing between 5 and 9 members in this venture. In all but two of the sites, the setting in which the observed *Roadmap* session occurred was a classroom.

The primary data sources for the Abt evaluation include: focus groups with AmeriCorps members; observations of members facilitating one unit of the *Roadmap* to youth; surveys completed by AmeriCorps members and youth after the *Roadmap* was completed; and mail surveys completed by AmeriCorps project supervisors and representatives from the youth-serving organizations² where the curriculum was facilitated. During the course of the data gathering process, several notable findings and positive impacts were identified.

¹ For more information on civic engagement and civic education please see Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* and Anne Colby's *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*.

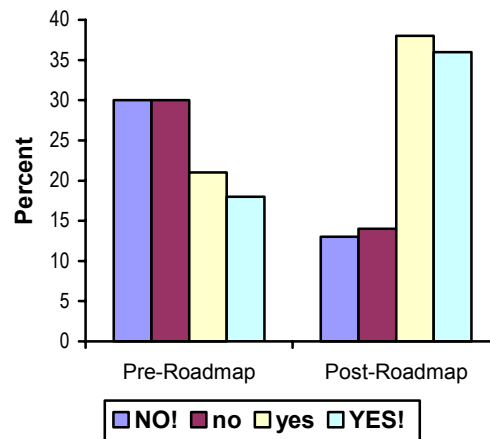
² Youth-serving organizations are the entities that partnered with AmeriCorps project organizations in the implementation and facilitation of the *Roadmap* curriculum. Examples of youth-serving organizations include: the YMCA, school districts, the Urban League, and other community organizations offering programs for youth.

Exhibit 1**Characteristics of Sites Visited**

WSC Project	Civic Engagement Partner	Number/Age of Youth	Number of Members	Facilitation Setting	Roadmap Unit Observed
Intergenerational Innovations	Campfire	12 Middle school	8	Classroom	11
Campus Connections	YMCA	5 Elementary school	5	Community garden	11
Federal Way School District	Teacher	10 High school	1	Classroom	10
Community Youth Services	YMCA Y-Kids	15 Elementary school	6	Classroom	7
Fremont Public Association	Urban League	9 Middle school	9	Classroom	14
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center	21 st Century Learning Initiative	13 Elementary school	9	Classroom	10
Cispus Learning Center	Funding provided by area organizations	17 Middle school	11	Classroom/ Outdoors	7–10

Overall notable findings and positive impacts include:

- The surveys administered to youth and members after they completed the *Roadmap* indicate that participants' understanding of what it means to live in a democratic community increased during the time they were engaged in the *Roadmap* (see Exhibit 2).
- Project supervisors reported that the curriculum enhanced member and youth understanding of the concept of community.
- Project supervisors reported that their organizations gained local visibility as a result of their participation in this initiative. This

Exhibit 2**Youth Responses to "I understand what a democracy is."**

increased local visibility could lead to new partnerships, thereby increasing the sustainability of community organizations.

- AmeriCorps members and youth reported significant positive changes for all questions on their respective surveys.
- Among the member subgroups examined (race, educational level, age, and gender), the differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic members are the most notable. Hispanic members exhibited significantly higher change scores than their non-Hispanic counterparts on 9 of the 16 questions on the member survey. It should be noted that Hispanic members generally exhibit lower pre-scores on these elements.
- The most notable finding from the analysis of youth subgroups is that Hispanic participants attained significantly higher change scores than their non-Hispanic counterparts on 7 of the 16 questions included on the survey. Once again, please note that Hispanic youth often exhibit lower pre-scores than their non-Hispanic peers.³

Another aspect of this evaluation of the pilot version of the *Roadmap* curriculum was the identification of barriers to effective implementation. It should be noted that WSC has already made major changes in the curriculum to address many of the issues described below.

Reservations expressed by stakeholders include:

- Members, project supervisors and youth-serving organization representatives all expressed some reservations about the length of the *Roadmap* and the task of keeping youth engaged over the 14-unit curriculum.
- Project supervisors reported that their members had some difficulty maintaining the interest of the youth to whom they facilitated the *Roadmap*. Often this was experienced in after-school programs where youth viewed the curriculum as an extension of their school day.
- Members expressed disappointment about the process by which the *Roadmap* was presented to them. Many members felt that they were not informed about the full extent of the *Roadmap* before enrolling in their year of service.
- Some members believed that the selection of inappropriate partner sites contributed greatly to problems experienced during implementation of the *Roadmap*. Generally speaking, the youth at these sites were not in middle school, the age range for which the curriculum was designed.
- Members were most concerned about the additional time associated with implementing and facilitating the *Roadmap* and the impact this had on the service they provide at their regular, full-time host sites.

³ The generally lower pre-scores exhibited by Hispanic AmeriCorps members and youth are consistent with the findings of some other national studies. For example, a review of Census data describing voter turnout for the 1994 and 1998 Congressional elections as well as the 2000 Presidential election reveals that Hispanic adults were less likely to vote than were other Americans of voting age (see www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/race/000484.html and www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p20-542.pdf). A study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics found that both Hispanic and African American youth in grades 4, 8, and 12 are less likely to score in the proficient range on metrics measuring civic awareness and engagement (see nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/findrace.asp).

As noted above, many of the challenges identified above have already been addressed by WSC through recent changes made to the curriculum itself and also the support available to AmeriCorps members facilitating the *Roadmap*. Perhaps the most visible change is the condensing of the *Roadmap* from 14 to 7 units. Other changes include an increased amount of emphasis placed on the *Roadmap* at the initial training offered to incoming members held in September 2003, the retention of an AmeriCorps Leader whose primary responsibility is providing ongoing support to AmeriCorps teams implementing and facilitating the *Roadmap*, and offering members the opportunity to interact with WSC staff and one another through a web blog devoted to the *Roadmap*.

In addition to the findings and reservations listed above, several other items of note were mentioned by stakeholders in the implementation and facilitation of the pilot version of the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* curriculum. These are listed below, grouped by the manner in which the information was gathered. The first results addressed are from the member focus groups. These focus groups were conducted on-site with AmeriCorps members participating in the implementation and facilitation of the *Roadmap* curriculum.

Other findings from the AmeriCorps member focus groups include:

- Members stated that exposing youth to the ideas and themes presented in the *Roadmap* was bound to have positive effects on their civic awareness and engagement.
- Members believed that the curriculum allowed for team-building opportunities among AmeriCorps members that may not have otherwise occurred.
- AmeriCorps members felt that the service projects developed as part of the *Roadmap* provided concrete examples of how youth could positively impact their community while addressing a genuine community need.

After completing the *Roadmap* curriculum, AmeriCorps members and youth were asked to fill out a survey to gauge their experiences with the curriculum. These data provide demographic information as well as further evidence of the benefits to AmeriCorps members and youth who participated in the *Roadmap* curriculum. Topics addressed in these surveys include *Roadmap* participants' opinions of their community, civic engagement, and foundational documents.

Other findings from the Roadmap AmeriCorps member and youth surveys include:

- The only subgroup where no significant differences exist for both youth and members is gender. The outcomes realized by both groups do not vary significantly when participants are examined by this demographic characteristic.
- Seventy-two percent of the members who completed this survey are white and 76 percent are female.
- Thirty-nine percent of the youth who completed a *Roadmap* survey are white.
- Over half (51 percent) of the youth who filled out a survey received subsidized school lunch while they participated in the *Roadmap* curriculum. This indicates that WSC met its goal of enhancing the services available to underserved populations via the implementation and facilitation of the *Roadmap*.

The final components of the data gathering process included in this study were mail surveys of project supervisors and youth-serving organizations participating in the *Roadmap* curriculum. These

surveys asked organizations participating in the *Roadmap* to describe their structure, partnerships with other community organizations, and their experience with the *Roadmap*.

Other findings from the project supervisor and youth-serving organization surveys include:

- Forty-three percent of project supervisors and 19 percent of the youth-serving organizations included in our sample reported that their involvement with the *Roadmap* led to a substantial number of new partnerships with other community service organizations. This result indicates that the *Roadmap* helps WSC meet the crucial goal of increasing the number of partnerships that exist between local service providers in Washington State.
- Project supervisors indicated that 48 percent of the service projects conducted by AmeriCorps members occur in rural settings.
- Fifty-eight percent of project supervisors reported being at least somewhat satisfied with the training they received prior to implementing the *Roadmap* curriculum.
- Ninety-five percent of project supervisors would participate in the *Roadmap* again.
- Nearly 80 percent of youth-serving organizations in our sample report that AmeriCorps members were at least pretty well prepared to facilitate the *Roadmap* curriculum.
- Ninety-six percent of youth-serving organizations would participate in a subsequent version of the *Roadmap*.
- Project supervisors stated that the curriculum allowed for team-building opportunities among AmeriCorps members that may not have otherwise occurred.
- Youth-serving organizations opined that the *Roadmap* offered their youth an opportunity to increase their knowledge of the needs and resources present in their home community.

Exhibit 3

Project Supervisors' Satisfaction with *Roadmap*-Related Training

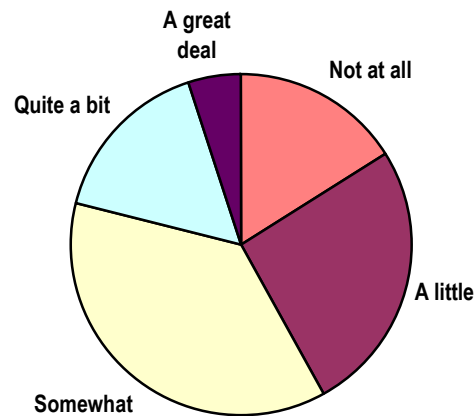
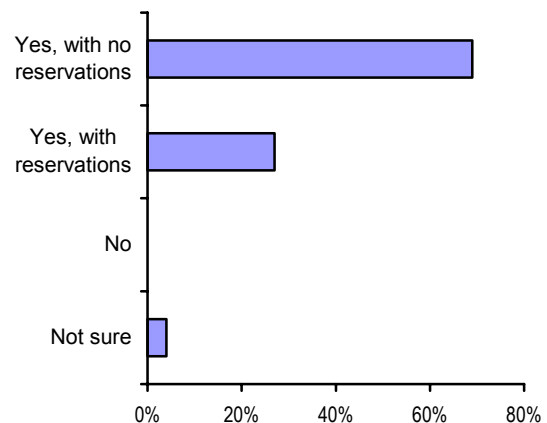


Exhibit 4

Would Youth-Serving Organizations Participate in the *Roadmap* Again?



- Youth-serving organizations were appreciative of the fact that the *Roadmap* provided their youth the opportunity to interact with positive adult role models, as represented by AmeriCorps members.⁴
- Youth-serving organizations stated that *Roadmap* service projects provided concrete examples of how youth could positively impact their community while addressing a genuine community need.

Conclusion

Overall, despite the expected difficulties associated with any new initiative, the pilot implementation of the *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* curriculum went quite well. Perhaps most noteworthy is WSC's willingness to incorporate feedback from other stakeholders into future iterations of the curriculum.

Also notable is the fact that curriculum participants exhibited positive changes from pre-test to post-test on all items included on the *Roadmap* survey. More than anything else, this finding suggests that the curriculum is positively impacting participants. Given the changes described above, it seems likely that future versions of the curriculum will be more user-friendly and at least as likely to positively impact participants.

As teams implement and facilitate the second version of the *Roadmap* curriculum, it will be interesting to examine this process in light of what was learned from the evaluation of the pilot version of the curriculum. Perhaps most heartening is the fact that AmeriCorps members and youth reported positive changes on the surveys included in the *Roadmap*. If WSC continues its policy of listening to stakeholder feedback and incorporating this information into the curriculum, one would expect that *Roadmap* participants' experiences with the curriculum will continue to be worthwhile.

⁴ This is a key point in the SEARCH training's list of developmental assets that facilitate the healthy development of young people. For more on these developmental assets, please see: <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/40Assets.pdf>.